

WEEKLY DENTAL UPDATE



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Silver Star Awarded Posthumously to Lieutenant Commander Hugh Rossman Alexander

WWII ERA NAVY DENTAL OFFICER POSTHUMOUSLY AWARDED SILVER STAR

On 2 April 2018, Rear Admiral Gayle Shaffer presented a posthumous Silver Star to Lieutenant Commander Hugh Rossman Alexander, a dental officer who valiantly sacrificed his life during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The award was accepted by his daughter, Mrs. Gloria Alexander Rogers. The following article is excerpted from the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service website:



By any measure, Lieutenant Commander Hugh Rossman Alexander served valiantly during the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941.

Nearly 77 years later, Alexander's daughter, Gloria Alexander Rogers, accepted a Silver Star Medal posthumously awarded to her father during a ceremony April 2.

Alexander, the senior dental officer aboard battleship *USS Oklahoma*, became trapped in a compartment when the ship capsized during the attack. He assisted numerous shipmates in escaping through a narrow porthole, deliberately selecting the most slender men to pass through an opening no more than 14 inches wide.

He sacrificed his life in the process.

Alexander subsequently received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his actions, and was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart in 1943 for wounds resulting in his death at Pearl Harbor, but

“his extraordinary deeds warranted a much higher military recognition, and today we have the opportunity to set the record straight,” said Rear Admiral Gayle Shaffer, Chief of the Navy Dental Corps, who officiated the ceremony.

Shaffer presented the award during an intimate ceremony with Rogers, family members, Dental Corps officers, and other Navy personnel at the Naval Air Station North Island Chapel in Coronado, San Diego.

The Silver Star Medal is the United States Armed Forces’ third highest personal decoration for valor in combat. Alexander is now the seventeenth officer in the 105-year history of the U.S. Navy Dental Corps to receive the award.

In a contemporaneous letter to Alexander’s widow, a fellow Dental Corps officer and his wife wrote, “Perhaps you remember Dr. and Mrs. DeWitt Hubbard. Dewitt took care of several men who were injured December 7th and many of them were loud in their praise of Dr. Alexander. They told DeWitt when they were trapped in a compartment on the ship, it was your husband who turned to the Chaplain and said, ‘Well Chaplain, we have only a few minutes to live, let’s get as many men out of here as we can.’”

“With this medal, we acknowledge a debt that will not diminish with time and can never be repaid,” Shaffer said during the presentation. “Our nation is blessed to have volunteers like Lieutenant Commander Alexander who risk their lives for our freedom.”



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